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After referring to his work on Latin Christianity, our author, with a charming failure to convey his meaning, remarks: "As in Jewish history I shall touch but rarely and occasionally on that of Christianity, so in Christianity the history of the Jews sometimes forces itself upon the attention."

In reading of the distinguished positions held by Jews now and in past times, one is astonished to read that "M. Fould is now the finance minister, as in the older days of France and of Spain, to the Emperor Louis Napoleon."

And finally, where our author objects to the Jewish exaggerations in the matter of numbers, he says: "600,000 fighting men were checked and only secured from rout through prevailing prayer to God, by one Bedouin tribe, the Amalekites." — Milman undoubtedly did not *mean* to say that the Amalekites had been so powerful in prayer.

These sentences are not exceptional. It is perhaps the worst feature of these monstrous irregularities, that they occur most frequently in the recent additions and the newer parts of the book. Many of them seem to be accountable, as the errors of one who is used to write for the purposes of public speaking, where gesture and the tone and modulation of the voice will do much to supply what is wanting, and to illustrate what is obscure in the language of a writer. But however we may account for these faults, we can offer nothing whatever in excuse of them.

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3. — *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America.* By ABEL STEVENS, LL. D., Author of "The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, called Methodism," etc. Vols. I. and II. New York: Carleton and Porter. 1864. Small 8vo. pp. 423, 511.

No one of the various sects into which Protestantism is divided has been more diligent in preserving the records and traditions of its early history than the Wesleyan Methodists. Within the last thirty years the press on both sides of the Atlantic has teemed with histories, biographies, essays, and occasional discourses, designed to commemorate the founders of the denomination, or to illustrate the story of its wonderful growth; and to this praiseworthy endeavor to do honor to its early preachers we owe the preservation of much historical material of general and permanent interest. Among the writers in this country who have labored with the most success in this department of ecclesiastical history, the author of the volumes before us holds a high rank; and his reputation extends even beyond the limits of his own denomination.

He was for several years editor of one of its chief periodical publications; and while thus employed, he enjoyed great facilities for collecting autobiographical details, local records, and manuscript sketches of one kind or another, of much importance to an historian. The study of Methodist history soon became his specialty, and nearly a quarter of a century ago he gave to the public the first fruits of his researches, in two volumes on the "Introduction and Early Progress of Methodism in the Eastern States," and in some other monographs. More recently he has published a "Life of Nathan Bangs," one of the great lights of the denomination in America, and an elaborate "History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, called Methodism," from its origin to its centenary jubilee in 1839. To the latter work, "The History of the Methodist Episcopal Church" is designed to form the complement, though it covers in part the same ground, and may be regarded as in some respects an independent production. The two volumes now printed bring the narrative down only to the year 1792, the date of the first regular General Conference, and are devoted to the planting and training of American Methodism. The remaining volumes, we presume, will continue the history to the present time.

In this work, as well as in those which have preceded it, our author addresses himself to the great body of miscellaneous readers, rather than to critics and scholars; and it is not difficult to understand the large popularity which his writings have enjoyed. His knowledge of his subject is ample; his diligence in hunting up minute details is unwearied; and his candor seldom fails. His style is clear, unambitious, and direct; and in his sketches of the pioneers of Methodism he exhibits considerable discrimination. But in two or three respects his treatment of his subject is open to criticism. He has interrupted his narrative by too frequent and too extended citations from other writers, thus giving to some parts of the work the appearance of a mere compilation; and he has been too minute and too prolix in his delineations of the early itinerants. If he had thrown most of his illustrative extracts into the form of foot-notes, and had much abridged his accounts of the many obscure persons mentioned, his narrative would have gained in vigor, in rapidity of movement, and in general interest. It was, indeed, natural that he should feel a denominational pride in the men who spread Methodism broadcast over the land, and that he should be tempted to gather into his own volumes every particular respecting them; but the lives of many of these men have been recorded in separate memoirs, and the interest in them must be mainly confined to readers of their own Church. In referring to the other Christian sects, Dr. Stevens seldom exhibits even the slightest trace of sectarian big-

otry; yet in two or three instances—in speaking of the Episcopal Church in this country, the Unitarians, and the New England Congregationalists—there is a tone of asperity which we should not have expected to find in a writer of so much candor and fairness of judgment. With the qualification implied in these remarks, our author's labors are deserving of high praise; and his volumes must be regarded as an important contribution to the ecclesiastical history of the United States.

Methodism owes its introduction into this country to a small company of Irish "Palatines" who came to America in the summer of 1760, and settled in the city of New York. One of them, Philip Embury, had been a class leader and local preacher in Ireland, and several of the other immigrants were more or less devoted Methodists. But their zeal appears to have been much chilled by the voyage or by the new social atmosphere by which they were surrounded; and it was not until 1766 that Embury assumed the duties of a preacher, and gathered around him a small society. In the following year he was joined by a volunteer associate in the ministry, Captain Thomas Webb, who had become a Methodist some years before, and had been authorized to preach by Wesley, though he still held a commission in the British army. Webb was an Englishman by birth, had seen service at Louisburg and Quebec, at both of which places he had been wounded, and was a man of energy and ability. Hearing of Embury's little company, he left Albany, where he had been employed for some time as barrack-master, and hastened to New York to aid the struggling society. He entered at once into the work with zeal and good judgment, and thus became one of the principal founders of American Methodism. "To Embury," as Dr. Stevens observes, "unquestionably belongs chronological precedence, by a few months, as the founder of American Methodism, but to Webb belongs the honor of a more prominent agency in the great event; of more extensive and more effective services; of the outspread of the denomination into Long Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware; the erection of its first chapels, and the introduction of Wesleyan itinerants." By his efforts, in connection with those of Embury, a rigging-loft in William Street was hired shortly after his arrival in New York, where they preached three times a week to as large audiences as the room could contain; and in October, 1768, the immediate fruit of their labor was seen in the dedication of the first Methodist chapel in America. It was a stone building, one story high, covered with blue plaster, and measured sixty feet in length and forty-two feet in breadth. The interior remained for a long time unfinished, the floor was sprinkled with sand, and the pulpit was constructed by Embury

himself. But if the society was poor, it was not wanting in zeal; and so rapidly did it increase in numbers, and so great was the interest to hear Webb and Embury, that within two years after the dedication of the chapel as many as a thousand hearers were at times gathered into the building and the area in front of it.

In 1767 or 1768, Webb went to Philadelphia, where he preached in a sail-loft, and formed a class of seven members; and in 1769 he introduced Methodism into Delaware. At a little later period he preached in Baltimore; and in 1772 he went to England, apparently to obtain additional preachers for the Colonies. The remainder of his life was spent, partly in America and partly in England, in the active promotion of the cause which he had espoused. His death occurred in 1796. President Adams, who heard him preach in Philadelphia in 1774, bears strong testimony to the effectiveness of his pulpit discourses. "In the evening," he writes in his Diary, "I went to the Methodist meeting, and heard Mr. Webb, the old soldier, who first came to America in the character of quartermaster under General Braddock. He is one of the most fluent, eloquent men I ever heard; he reaches the imagination and touches the passions very well, and expresses himself with great propriety. The singing here is very sweet and soft indeed."\* But it was not by his power as a preacher alone that Webb contributed so effectually to the establishment of American Methodism. His money was freely given to aid in the erection of chapels, and his executive ability was of great use in arranging and organizing classes and circuits, while his urgent appeals when he was in England were the means of bringing several of the most successful laborers from abroad into the field.

Not very long after Embury's arrival in New York, Methodism was introduced into Maryland by an Irish local preacher, named Robert Strawbridge, who settled on Sam's Creek, in Frederick County, and entered with great zeal on the work of an itinerant minister. He was a fluent and energetic speaker, with much of the genuine Irish fervor, thoroughly in earnest, and with an undoubting confidence that the modest wants of his family would be provided for while he was engaged in "seeking for the lost sheep." He did not confine his labors to his own neighborhood, but extended his travels into other parts of the Colony, and even into Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Among his converts was Richard Owen, the first Methodist preacher born on this continent, a man of moderate abilities, but of considerable power as a speaker, and with the frugal and industrious habits which charac-

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\* Works of John Adams, Vol. II. p. 401.

terized many of his fellow-laborers. Several other preachers were called into the field by Strawbridge's persuasive words and example; and it was in no small degree through his preaching that Methodism became firmly established in Maryland.

Spreading southward, and still gaining strength with its advance, the new denomination soon acquired a footing in Virginia; and in 1772 we find another Transatlantic preacher, Devereux Jarratt, laboring in that Colony, principally at Norfolk and in its vicinity. From this point he occasionally made his way into North Carolina; and to his preaching is ascribed the conversion of Jesse Lee, the founder of Methodism in New England. Another pioneer of the Church, whose name must be mentioned with those already enumerated, was John King, an Englishman, who came over in 1769, and whose labors extended through all the Middle States, and as far south as Raleigh, North Carolina. To these men the planting of Methodism over a large part of the country must be ascribed; and their names must always be held in especial honor by the members of their own denomination. At the same time the purity of their lives, the earnestness and simplicity of their faith, and the usefulness of their labors, will be cordially recognized by persons of different theological opinions.

The success of these laborers speedily attracted the notice of Wesley, and from time to time he sent over additional missionaries to aid in the prosecution of the work. One of these was Francis Asbury, then a young man of twenty-six, but already giving evidence of those remarkable powers which made him the most conspicuous personage in the early history of his denomination in this country. He was the only son of an honest and intelligent peasant of Staffordshire, but had received only the most elementary instruction, and had become interested in Methodist preaching when he was a mere boy. When he was seventeen he began to hold public meetings; before he was eighteen he preached his first sermons; and at twenty-one he set out as an itinerant preacher, though not yet received by the Annual Conference. In the year in which he came to America, 1771, only three hundred and sixteen members were returned as belonging to the infant churches; at his death, in 1816, the denomination included more than two hundred and eleven thousand members and upward of seven hundred itinerant preachers. During these forty-five years he is supposed to have preached about sixteen thousand five hundred sermons, or an average of one each day, and to have travelled about two hundred and seventy thousand miles; and he is said to have presided in two hundred and twenty-four annual conferences, and to have ordained more than four thousand preachers. Such was the tireless activity of this remarkable

man; and by such exertions was Methodism so early and so widely spread over the country. Asbury, like many of his associates, was a solemn and impressive preacher, with a clear and sonorous voice, and his sermons were often marked by bursts of fervent eloquence; but his great success was mainly owing to his flaming zeal and to his unrivalled administrative ability. He was often despotic and unreasonable, but he had great insight into character; his judgment, in general, was sound, and his energy was such as to surmount all obstacles, and to bear down all opposition.

The year after Asbury's arrival, Wesley sent over another man of commanding ability, Thomas Rankin, to serve as general superintendent in America. In company with Webb and several other missionaries, Rankin embarked in the spring of 1773, and after a long and tedious voyage landed at Philadelphia on the 3d of June. The same night he preached his first sermon in America; and a few weeks afterward he attended the first annual conference held on this side of the Atlantic. Ten preachers were present, all of them of foreign birth. The session extended over three days, and the whole number of members in the various societies was returned as one thousand one hundred and sixty. Two of the rules adopted were of no small importance as regards the subsequent growth of the denomination. By the fourth rule the preachers in America were forbidden to reprint any of Mr. Wesley's books without his authority, when it could be obtained, and without the consent of the brethren; and by the fifth rule Robert Williams was permitted to sell the books which he had already printed, but was forbidden to print any more, except in accordance with the terms of the fourth rule. It seems that Williams had printed many of Wesley's sermons in small pamphlets, which had been widely circulated. "But, notwithstanding the good that had been done by the circulation of the books," says an early historian of Methodism, "it now became necessary for all the preachers to be united in the same course of printing and selling our books, so that the profits arising therefrom might be divided among them, or applied to some charitable purpose." It was not, however, until fifteen or sixteen years afterward that the "Book Concern" was regularly organized, and that the business of publishing denominational books became one of the most important operations of the Church. At the present time, according to our author, there are two publishing houses and five depositories, giving employment to twelve editors and nearly five hundred clerks and operatives, and distributing nearly thirty thousand different publications, including fourteen periodicals, with a monthly circulation in the aggregate of more than one million copies. But, from the first, religious

reading had been one of the chief instrumentalities on which the itinerants had relied to quicken and keep alive the impression produced by their sermons and prayers; and as they rode over their wide-extended circuits they carried with them a supply of books, which were eagerly purchased by the new converts. How much importance was attached to this means of instructing the common people is seen in the adoption of these rules at so early a period in the history of the denomination.

During the Revolution the Methodist preachers were the subjects of not a little persecution, and several of the societies almost entirely died out. Most of the preachers of foreign birth returned to England soon after the breaking out of the war, while many even of the native itinerants were strongly suspected of favoring the royal cause. Some of them were mobbed or cast into jail, and others were obliged to seek safety in concealment. So great was the decline of Methodism in some portions of the country, that Dr. Stevens thinks there was not a single Methodist in the Northeastern States at the close of the war. Yet even during this period there were frequent revivals in the Middle and Southern States, and in spite of the obstacles which it had to encounter from political prejudice and the lawless state of society in many places, the denomination actually gained in strength. In the conference of 1783, the number of itinerants reported was eighty-two, and the whole number of members a little less than fourteen thousand, of whom only sixteen hundred and twenty-three were north of Mason and Dixon's line. With the return of peace, and the establishment of American independence, began that wonderful growth of Methodism which soon placed it at the head of all our religious denominations.

Meanwhile a controversy of some importance had arisen among the preachers as to their right to administer the Christian ordinances. On the one hand, it was contended that those who had not received episcopal ordination were not authorized to perform this function, while on the other hand it was justly maintained that to enforce this view was to deprive the great mass of the people of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and that the necessities of the case required the adoption of a different policy. To obviate this difficulty, and to heal a rupture which threatened to endanger the existence of the Church, Wesley applied to Bishop Lowth "to ordain at least one presbyter to administer the sacraments among the American Methodists." The request was refused, and finally, in 1784, Wesley took upon himself to remedy the evil. On the 1st of September, at Bristol, then as now an important stronghold of the denomination, he ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey deacons; and on the following day he proceeded a step farther, and ordained the same persons elders, and Thomas Coke, a



graduate of Oxford and a man of much energy and ability, superintendent or bishop of the Methodist societies in America. A fortnight afterward they embarked for the new field of their labors; and on the 3d of November they landed in New York. The same evening Coke preached his first sermon in the New World, and at once entered on the discharge of his episcopal duties.

On the 24th of December he attended the first General Conference, in Baltimore. At this memorable meeting, which is commonly called the Christmas Conference, and at which about sixty preachers were present from different parts of the country, the necessary steps were taken for the organization of an Episcopal Church, with the three hierarchical grades of superintendents, elders, and deacons. Coke and Asbury were unanimously elected superintendents, and subsequently received the personal title of Bishops. The Conference lasted ten days; and among its proceedings were the adoption of a liturgy, which, however, was not received with much favor by the societies and soon ceased to be used; the enactment of rules for the government of the Church and the discipline of its members; the election of preachers to the different orders; and their ordination. On one other subject, which had already been freely discussed, the Conference took high and honorable ground. Referring to the institution of slavery, they declared: "We view it as contrary to the golden law of God, on which hang all the law and the prophets, and the inalienable rights of mankind, as well as every principle of the Revolution, to hold in the deepest debasement, in a more abject slavery than is perhaps to be found in any part of the world except America, so many souls that are all capable of the image of God. We therefore think it our most bounden duty to take immediately some effectual method to extirpate this abomination from among us." Accordingly, every Methodist was required to "execute and record within twelve months after notice from the assistant" a deed emancipating all his slaves at certain specified ages; and his failure to comply with this rule made him amenable to various ecclesiastical penalties. But members in Virginia were allowed two years to determine the question of compliance; and so great was the excitement, that it was deemed expedient to suspend the rule altogether within six months. The controversy did not, however, end here; and in our own day we have witnessed its culmination in that memorable schism by which the Church was split into two great geographical sections.

The seven or eight years which elapsed between this episcopal organization of Methodism and the first regular General Conference were crowded with labors by the new bishops and their fellow-workers. A college was founded at Abingdon in Maryland; active and ener-

getic men began to preach beyond the Alleghanies, in New England, and in Nova Scotia and Canada; the number of members was increased from a little less than fifteen thousand to nearly sixty-six thousand, and the number of preachers from eighty-three to two hundred and sixty-six. At this point, as we have remarked, the portion of Dr. Stevens's work now published closes. But if we extend our view across the interval of seventy years, we shall find that the wonderful progress of the denomination has continued, and has kept pace with the growth of the country. By the Minutes of the Conference of 1864, we find that the number of members at that time was 928,300, an increase over the preceding year of 4,926; that there were 6,821 travelling preachers, and 8,205 local preachers; and that the benevolent contributions to the three great denominational organizations, the Missionary Society, the Sunday-School Society, and the Tract Society, amounted to \$529,829.44, an increase of more than one fourth over the contributions of 1863. If to these figures we add the numbers belonging to the Church South, and to the seven or eight smaller sects connected with the denomination, we shall find that the whole number of American Methodists at the present time is not less than one million six hundred thousand.

While considering this immense growth of the denomination, the causes of which may be readily traced in its rejection of the Calvinistic theology, in the remarkable zeal and energy of its early preachers, in the fervor of its hymnology, in the social character which was from the first impressed on its organization, in its adoption of the itinerant system, and in the special adaptation of its preaching to the wants of a new and uncultivated people, there are two or three questions which must occur to every thoughtful reader of Dr. Stevens's volume. What is likely to be the future of Methodism in America? How far does the transformation through which it is now apparently passing touch that which is essential to its continued growth and influence? Will the erection of sumptuous church edifices in the place of its first humble chapels, the introduction of paid choirs and the disuse of congregational singing, and the extension of the term of ministerial service in a single church, leading perhaps to the abandonment of the itinerant system, weaken its hold on the masses of the people?—these are questions which cannot be overlooked in contemplating the history of Methodism. But this is neither the time nor the place for their consideration; and the remarks which we might otherwise offer must be deferred for a more convenient opportunity. Meanwhile we shall look with much interest for the continuation of Dr. Stevens's work.